UNITED NATIONS

World Chronicle

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UNICEF

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UNITED NATIONS CHILDERN'S FUND (UNICEF)

James Grant, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), reviews the current international situation of the world's children. Conflicts and other economic and social problems affect childern the most. UNICEF asks that countries invest more in people to secure a better future for their childern. More resources must be allocated to education and social development. A joint 20/20 initiative proposed by three UN agencies (UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF) calls on donor countries and recipient nations to increase allocations for basic social services to 20 per cent of their aid or development budgets. The World Summit for Social Development is the first summit called for by the United Nations dedicated to social issues.

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ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**. The World Community has long hoped for the time when it could meet the basic needs of every human being and improve the quality of life for all people, but especially children. However, if current world political, economic and social problems persist, children will suffer the most. What can the international community do to improve the lot of children and secure a better future for them?

Our guest today is James Grant, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, or UNICEF. Joining me to talk with Mr. Grant are Bhaskar Menon of *The Times of India* and Afsane Bassir Pour of *Le Monde*. Mr. Grant, welcome to World Chronicle.

GRANT: It's good to be here.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Grant, I think at the outset congratulations are in order. You received from President Clinton at the White House a few weeks ago the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honour bestowed by the United States, well deserved, I'm sure all your friends would agree.

GRANT: Thank you. I must say for one who immigrated to this country, it is a particular honour.

LITTLEJOHNS: Where did you emigrate from?

GRANT: From Canada.

LITTLEJOHNS: Oh, not so far away.

GRANT: Not so far away, but born in China.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Grant, before we get into the Social Summit, which is to be held in March of next year in Copenhagen, to which the UNICEF will be making a major contribution, I'd like to ask you about the situation in Rwanda, since it's been on the front pages and in the television news for so long, and UNICEF of course has been very much involved in the relief operation. What are your feelings about it? Is the situation getting under control at last?

GRANT: I think you can say it is beginning to get under control. There are apprehensions that the neighbouring country Burundi may go through a similar explosion, except for the fact that, having seen what happened in Rwanda, where everybody seems to be losing, this is serving as a damper. But Burundi is a very explosive place. In Rwanda itself, we have one great advantage, I think, at this time over Somalia, southern Sudan, Angola, which is that there is now a new government

that's in, and basically the individuals are competent, responsible, so that the period of major conflict inside the country is now past, and there is hanging over all this of course the cloud that the former Rwandan government may try to do what Pol Pot did, which was to build a refugee base --

LITTLEJOHNS: In Cambodia.

GRANT: -- in Cambodia -- he built it on the Thai border -- from which he could come back, from which they could come back. But basically it is really one of the worst tragedies in modern history to have between 500,000 and 1 million people die. And we of course are particularly concerned because there are so -- never have we had a conflict in which so many children have lost their parents. And we have some 200,000 unaccompanied children in Rwanda at this time.

LITTLEJOHNS: What's UNICEF doing for these kids?

GRANT: Well, it's in the process of trying to get them -- first, identify them, to see that they are -- get some minimum amount of food, shelter, clothing; get them into some -- try to reunite them with some members of their families or their village, their communities --

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm sure that's a pretty hopeless task, isn't it?

GRANT: -- and get them back to school. Well, it's not nearly as hopeless as you would think, and my estimate is that probably between two-thirds and three-quarters of these children will get regularized into some situation. This is what happened in Cambodia after the Pol Pot years, where you also had a lot of adults killed, in that period; while a lot of children died of malnutrition, starvation, there was a disproportionately high number of children that survived.

MENON: Mr. Grant, you've been at UNICEF now, what, over a decade?

GRANT: Yes.

MENON: And in this time you've seen this kind of disaster happen again and again and again, and every time you pick up the pieces and try to get lives back together and you go on to another one. What does it -- how do you feel about the human species after having gone through this experience?

GRANT: Better.

MENON: You do feel better?

GRANT: Better in the sense that --

LITTLEJOHNS: How can you feel better after what's happened in Rwanda, for example? And Somalia?

GRANT: Well, what you've got to remember is we have had a series of disasters down through the centuries. Fifty years ago, these were not matters for concern. I was

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in Calcutta at the tail end of the Great Bengal Famine. More people died on the streets of Calcutta in '43, early '44, than have died in Rwanda and Somalia together. The grain stores of Calcutta were full, and the British raj of the day did not feel any responsibility to bridge the gap between that food and twice as many people dying as have died in Rwanda! And in this sense it paralleled very much what happened in Ireland a century before that, when the blight that -- the moisture that brought the --

LITTLEJOHNS: Potato famine.

GRANT: -- potato famine brought the best corn crops to Ireland in then modern history. And these were all exported under armed guard while hundreds of thousands, millions of Irish potato farmers, subsistence farmers, starved. So --

LITTLEJOHNS: And immigrated to the United States.

GRANT: Immigrated to the United States. There's -- out of every disaster there are some benefits, you see. But this I think is a -- you contrast that with at least the efforts that the world community is making today, and they may be imperfect, and these efforts that we're making today in 1994 go substantially beyond, let's say, what we were willing to do in 1988. Several conflicts in 1988 -- in Angola, in Mozambique -- there was nothing but the most modest interventions on the other side, whereas beginning in '89 in southern Sudan, both parties acquiesced to major relief efforts. And it's like a six cylinder truck stumbling along on three, sometimes, or four cylinders, but this represents a mammoth shift. But it does warn us that these kinds of things can be very infectious.

MENON: But isn't it a fact that UNICEF has had to come up with a whole new programme about children and violence, whereas a hundred years ago children were deliberately left out of conflict? Now that's no longer true, children are targeted, by our --

GRANT: True.

MENON: -- by people wanting to make an impression on the enemy.

GRANT: Well, it's -- shall we say it's the civilian population that's targeted. World War One, 90 per cent of the casualties were military; World War Two, 50 per cent were military, half were civilian; in the conflicts of the last decade, 10, 15 years, 30, 90 per cent of the victims are civilians, over half are children. So this is a very disturbing pattern. But it does come kind of with the techniques that are used in conflict today.

BASSIR POUR: Mr. Grant, you spoke about the international community's willingness to donate more to disasters and to wars. But this also brings us to another problem that you're going to have to face now -- donor fatigue. We feel more and more, with every war and disaster and catastrophe, that countries are saying we've been

paying for this war and this war; there is a general donor fatigue. And in your programme, in the 20/20 initiative which you will explain, you're asking them to make a major jump up to 20 per cent of their national budgets. How will you deal with this donor fatigue, and how do you feel it from the governments?

GRANT: Well, one of the -- I really don't feel a donor -- if you talk about the public fatigue in responding to emergencies, it's actually public opinion that says to governments you've got to respond to Rwanda. It's when the television and the commentators and the print media reported what was going on in Rwanda that governments -- which had been kind of dithering, if I may say so -- were forced by the politics of the situation to move. And one of the reasons why there is disillusion with foreign aid is that people feel that it isn't going for the right purposes. And when you think of the fact that less than 10 per cent of the official aid that's provided goes for basic education, primary health care, family planning, nutrition, rural water supply and water for slums, people feel that's what it ought to be used for. So my own judgement is that if governments were to allocate at least 20 per cent of their foreign aid to these purposes in which the public believes, that two things will happen: One is with them we now know we could have a series of dramatic successes in very short order, in periods of two years, five years, ten years, including in the population field. Secondly, I think public opinion would then be supportive of more foreign aid for -- I mean, ultimately a country needs roads and harbours and does need the help in infrastructure, but first things first. An investment in people is what -- an expending on people is what the donor countries' citizens want. And also, we have learned in the last 20 years it is the best development economics as well.

MENON: When you put this idea to government officials, both in developing countries and in developed countries, what kind of response do you get?

GRANT: Well, what you get is great rhetorical willingness, and then what you find is that governments have their favourite countries that they've had alliances with in the past, special relationships that they -- in the case of the US, for example, speaking as a US citizen, something like almost a third of the US foreign aid programme goes to Israel and Egypt, two countries which get preferential treatment. You look at the main aid programmes of most donors and you get some similar, maybe not as exaggerated, treatments.

LITTLEJOHNS: So you're saying this is based more on politics than on need? These two countries don't need so much, and others do?

GRANT: I would put it that way, yes. And I would say also that it does reflect -- in the '50s, '60s and '70s, the concept of development was very heavily centred

on economic growth. If you increased economic output, the rising tide would carry all ships with it. Now we know from experience, first, that that happens very imperfectly, and the countries such as Brazil, which had rather spectacular economic growth, could leave the great mass, over half the population, behind, and they would not benefit from it. And secondly, that we did not then understand how much, if a country really wants to progress, it needs to have educated people, healthy people. And the new concept of development is that development must not only produce economic growth, it must contribute to dealing with the environment problem, the population problem, with training people so that the whole population can be brought into economic growth, and to avoid the social disintegration that we see in Somalia and so many other places. And really, this is what the World Social Summit is about. It reflects this new concept that really it's -- the cutting edge of progress is what happens to human beings, and what happens to roads and dams and everything else, while important, must be supportive of them.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is World Chronicle. Our guest is James Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF. Afsane?

BASSIR POUR: Mr. Grant, Michael mentioned that you just met with President Clinton. America is one of your allies, I've heard the best allies, in UNICEF. But it's also one of the major problems that you face. I remember during -- for the World Summit for Children it was very difficult, I still don't know if they've ratified. And also on health care, I see that health care, universal health care is one of the things, one of the initiatives --

LITTLEJOHNS: Priorities for children.

BASSIR POUR: -- in the 20/20 Initiative. Now, did you bring up any of these problems with the President? Did you get a chance to do that?

GRANT: I have, not in this ceremony, but in other ceremonies. And I must say that the Medal of Freedom was given to me in recognition of the work that I've done in just those fields. So that bespeaks one set of values coming out of the White House at this date. But we have spoken, and the United States President Bush did come to the World Summit for Children, it has signed the World Summit Declaration, or Plan of Action. What it has not signed is there is now a Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the World Summit for Children called on all countries to act on expeditiously, and 165 countries have signed, and another 11 have signed their intention of doing so soon. So we have 165 ratified, 11 signed, and there's a handful of countries, including the United States and Saudi Arabia, they're the two, the principal, that have not acted on this yet.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Grant, what is UNICEF going into the Social Summit with? I mean, what will your contribution to the debate be? What do you expect to achieve from the Social Summit for children, the children of the world?

GRANT: What we expect to achieve from this is powerful reinforcement of a global movement for children, and --

LITTLEJOHNS: But you already got that out of the Summit for Children, didn't you? I mean, wasn't --

GRANT: The World Summit for Children in 1990? Yes. And this becomes --

LITTLEJOHNS: So what can come out of this that didn't come out of that?

GRANT: Well, this one -- the World Summit for Children did tend to focus more on children and the immediate family, like clean water, and that. What we're hoping will come out of this is not only the boost for all the goals of the World Summit for Children, but new initiatives, new targets for addressing employment and jobs. We now know how to -- and demonstrated it -- how to bring basic education to all, primary health care to all, rural water supply, all at fairly low costs. But if you are going to overcome poverty, people not only need to be healthy and educated, but they also need to have some capacity to work, to earn income. So that a major focus of the World Social Summit is going to be on how do we complete this cycle and bring in the jobs and income earning side. It will also focus, of course, on the social disintegration issues, the problems that youth face -- drugs, crime.

MENON: You talk about jobs: of course, the governments don't create jobs, businesses do. Businessmen do. So do you, in your job, deal with businessmen? And how do they respond to what you say about this?

GRANT: Sure. And they respond positively. Now, there are alternate ways of producing growth. Some strategies for growth are far more job intensive than others. The East Asian countries -- Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore -- they all followed a strategy that was based upon the one thing they had, which was people. Otherwise they had rocks and water, mountains and water. And theirs was a human skills-led development strategy, whereas countries like Brazil and Mexico, which had vast resources, tended to go a capital-intensive strategy, which actually downplayed jobs, so that the modernization of agriculture in East Asia lead to a doubling of the work force per 100 hectares, while in Brazil and Mexico you saw a two-thirds reduction of labour, of jobs. So that there needs to be a whole new attention on this set of issues and incentives to be done to them. If you want the small farmer to be successful, that small farmer needs to have credit, needs to have technology. I'm a pretty good handyman around the

house because I now have a whole set of appropriate tools that when I first got married didn't exist, most didn't. But now we have the drills with all the attachments and the --

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. "Fix It" Grant.

GRANT: Well, that's right! But the technology has been adapted to our needs. And most countries of the world have not adapted either credit or the technologies for the little farmer, so the big farmer, who first used big tractors, big combines, gets a big leg-up on them. So these are -- this is the kind of focus that we'll see there.

If I may, let me just say that the Social Summit -- as we're approaching the end of this decade, I think it's worth remembering that the world is in the midst of completing the biggest revolution of recorded history. And that revolution is basically -- all you have to do is to think about 50 years ago, when the UN was founded, 49 years ago, 51 countries. The aspirations for empire of Japan, Germany, Italy had just been defeated. But they still aspired to remain empires: Churchill intended the British Empire was going to last for decades longer; DeGaulle was intent on lasting decades longer. The idea of human rights conventions had not gotten anywhere. Rachel Carson and her concern with *Silent Spring* was still more than a decade off.

LITTLEJOHNS: The environmental movement.

GRANT: The environmental movement. Betty Friedan and all the women's movement in its present form was more than a decade off. Even on the racism side, this was just when apartheid was falling into place in South Africa, and Martin Luther King was -- nobody knew his name in 1945. Well, in essence, through history governments have been organized, society has been organized under conditions of scarcity, where the great mass of the citizens in most countries of the world supported their chief. I mean, a relic of this, as a British subject when I was born, is that you are born a British subject, subject to the king.

LITTLEJOHNS: Not a citizen, a subject.

GRANT: But a subject. And England may have been fairly diverse and pluralistic at that time, but there was -- 90 per cent of the population of the British Empire was up to service this --

LITTLEJOHNS: Including your country, Canada.

GRANT: Including my country, Canada, until they managed to get themselves in a different relationship. In these 50 years, we have seen the world shift from that kind of an orientation to one where now the basic purpose of society and government is to create conditions in which the individual is first. There were probably --

LITTLEJOHNS: That's all very well, as you talk about the individual being first. What about society? I mean, society is important. That's a whole collection of individuals.

GRANT: That's right.

LITTLEJOHNS: You can't put the right of the individual ahead of the needs of society as a whole.

GRANT: Right. But in the old days, 50 years ago, society did not include blacks; society did not include women; society did not include members of the empire, the subjects of the empires. So the whole nature of society has been redefined. Children had no rights 50 years ago. You read Dickens of 100 years ago, and you really see how -- even in England! -- how terrible it was. And this is really the condition of children in many parts of the world, India, even today. And so it is this historic transformation that is taking place. And the Social Summit, what you're seeing now in these -- the women's meeting in Beijing, the third of the mega-meetings on women, the World Social Summit, which is the first meeting called by the UN exclusively as a summit on social issues, are really pushing toward, shall we call it, the unfinished agenda. We've seen more increase in life expectancy since World War Two than in the preceding 2000 years. Since 1960 we've seen the number of people going through the schooling system increase from less than half to more than three-quarters. Every front, there has been more progress for human beings. Now, at the same time, there are many things slipping backwards. And this is where the Somalias and the --

BASSIR POUR: Rwandas.

GRANT: -- Rwandas, the Bosnias come in. But we shouldn't be allowed to lose sight of the fact that if you take any five-year period, the net progress in the last 50 years has been substantial.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Grant, I was going to ask you what UNICEF has achieved and what you expect to achieve apart from what you've already told us from the summit, but we're out of time. Thank you for being with us on this edition of World Chronicle.

Our guest has been James Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF. He was interviewed by Bhaskar Menon of *The Times of India* and Afsane Bassir Pour of *Le Monde*. I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of World Chronicle.

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